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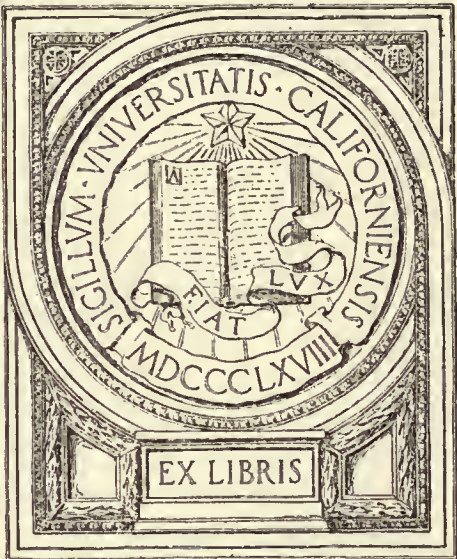
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MINISTRY OF FOOD.

FIRST REPORT
OF THE
DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE
ON THE
WHOLESALE FOOD MARKETS OF LONDON.

23rd February, 1920.

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND OF HIS MAJESTY.



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CHAIRMAN: MR. C. A. MCCURDY, K.C., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to Ministry of Food.

VICE-CHAIRMAN: LT.-COL. E. F. STRANGE, C.B.E., Assistant Secretary to Ministry of Food.

LORD HINDLIP.

SIR LULHAM POUND, Bt., Nominated by the Corporation of the City of London.

SIR GEORGE BETTESWORTH PIGGOTT, K.B.E., J.P., Nominated by the London County Council.

CAPT. W. J. WADE, M.B.E., Nominated by the Corporation of the City of Manchester.

MR. D. CARMICHAEL, Secretary to the London Trades Council and Nominated by the Consumers' Council.

MR. A. E. WATERSON, M.P., Nominated by the Parliamentary Committee of the Co-operative Congress.

MISS K. MANICOM, Workers' Union.

MAJOR GRANVILLE WHEELER, M.P., C.B.E., Chairman of the Central Chamber of Agriculture, 1919.

CAPTAIN JAMES O'GRADY, National Federation of General Workers.

SIR WILFRED STOKES, K.B.E.

MR. JOHN WARDLE, Commercial Manager, Metropolitan Railway.

MR. W. H. PEAT, F.C.A., Financial Secretary, Ministry of Food.

MR. C. B. FISHER, C.B.E., Agricultural Adviser, Ministry of Food.

MR. C. C. BOYD, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Fish, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Ministry of Food.

MR. H. GREENWOOD, Deputy Divisional Commissioner for London and Home Counties.

MR. P. B. PROCTOR, Director of Meat Supplies, Ministry of Food.

SECRETARY: MR. J. SCHOLES, O.B.E.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY: MISS K. M. CORNISH.

FIRST REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON THE WHOLESALE FOOD MARKETS OF LONDON.

TO THE FOOD CONTROLLER.

We have the honour to submit our first report, which for reasons set out therein is limited to the question of the constitution of a Market Authority for London.

1. The Committee was appointed with the following terms of reference:—

“To consider and report whether the existing wholesale markets for food in London are adequate, economical in their working, and efficient in their administration; to consider the influence of wholesale market facilities on food prices; and to report what steps, if any, can usefully be taken in order to effect an improvement in the wholesale distribution of food by means of public markets.”

The reference is in general terms, and might receive an interpretation so wide as to cover, for instance, grain or tea markets, but we have thought it advisable to limit our investigations in the first instance to wholesale markets dealing with perishable foodstuffs, namely, fish, fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry and game.

On the other hand, we have regarded the reference as including all such markets in Greater London, whether within the Administrative County of London or not.

2. We have already examined a considerable number of witnesses, but it is clear that some further time must necessarily elapse before a full report can be made on the various questions arising out of the terms of reference. We have, however, heard sufficient evidence to convince us that, in the case of some of the markets, improvements and extensions are urgently required which cannot be carried out under their present ownership and management, and that in the case of other markets the question of removal ought at once to be considered. We would point out that no existing Authority has the necessary powers to deal with this question.

In view of these circumstances and the matters referred to in paragraph 8 below, we think it desirable to issue this interim report without further delay.

3. A list is appended of the principal authorised wholesale markets in Greater London, with brief notes tracing the history of the markets and indicating the authorities under which they are held. It will be seen that the principal owner is the Corporation of the City of London, whose authority is exercised under a Charter of Edward III., dated 1326, which granted and confirmed to the Citizens of London exclusive market rights and privileges within seven miles from the city.

The owners of the other markets comprise local authorities, private owners and a railway company. In the case of practically all these markets the monopoly rights of the market owners are not clearly defined, and in some instances do not appear to exist. For example, although the owner of the Spitalfields Market rights was successful in preventing the establishment of a market at Stratford (a distance of about four miles from Spitalfields), except under his licence, the monopoly rights of the owners of the Borough Market do not extend beyond a radius of 1,000 yards, whilst the representative of the owners of Covent Garden Market informed the Committee that there was no definite area over which the market rights could be regarded as extending.

4. While we do not, at this stage of our enquiry, wish to express any opinion as to the economy or efficiency with which individual markets are at present administered, it is clear that in many respects the existing markets, regarded as a whole, are inadequate to cope with the ever-growing volume of business. Markets which were built 40 or 50 years ago are no longer capable of meeting the needs of the London of to-day with its increasing population. The owners of several of the markets realise this, and are satisfied that improvements are desirable, but for one reason or another they do not at present find themselves in a position to carry out the necessary work. The following examples may be mentioned:—

(a) The owners of the Borough Market desire to extend the market and to improve the approaches, but they cannot proceed with this proposal as they have no power to acquire property compulsorily.

(b) The owners of Covent Garden Market would be willing to dispose of their interest. It appears, moreover, from the evidence given that they do not consider themselves justified in contemplating the large expenditure which would be necessary to place the market and its approaches in a thoroughly satisfactory condition.

(c) The Great Eastern Railway Company informed the Committee that the Company have considered the question of enlarging Stratford Market and improving the access

thereto—a work which is admittedly necessary—but they hesitate to incur the large expenditure needed in view of their opinion that any substantial benefit resulting from the improvement would accrue to the owner of Spitalfields Market and not to the railway company.

5. Closely allied to the question of market facilities is the question of transport of produce to and its distribution from the markets. A market, to be efficient, must be furnished with adequate means of access for buyers and sellers; its site must be convenient in relation to the railways and waterways over which the bulk of the market produce is or may be conveyed. The area of the market itself and the streets in the vicinity must be well able to cope with the road traffic proper to the market without unduly dislocating the normal traffic of the neighbourhood.

In some cases improvements of approaches and access to existing markets are imperative. Such improvements would not only decrease the deterioration and loss of foodstuffs, which occur from time to time, but would materially release vehicles for general merchandise, reduce the congestion of the streets, and otherwise react to the public advantage.

We may here point out that any saving in the transport of foodstuffs would ultimately have the effect of bringing down the cost of these commodities to the consumer. The question of improved access is of importance in view of the fact that some of the markets are situated within closely congested areas, and although in pre-war days the bulk of the market traffic was disposed of before the ordinary traffic began, the tendency during and since the war has been for the business of the markets to be transacted at a later hour, and the problem has consequently become more serious. Moreover, the future development of motor traffic has to be taken into consideration. The approaches of many of the existing markets are not suitable for this class of traffic. We were informed by the representative of the Railway Executive Committee that the Railway authorities would be able to speed up the delivery of fish from the termini if motor traction could be utilised, but that it was impossible for the Railway Companies to use motor lorries for this purpose so long as the central fish market remained at Billingsgate in its present congested surroundings.

It has also been given in evidence by traders that, whilst there is an increase in motor traction to certain markets, there would be a much larger increase in the use of motor lorries if the street approaches and market facilities generally could be made suitable for this particular form of transport, which would have an appreciable effect in relieving congestion.

6. We desire to draw attention to the fact that the functions of the wholesale food markets of London are not limited to the area controlled by any existing Local Authority. The produce coming into these markets is distributed over an area extending far beyond the London limits, and prices ruling in the London markets have a direct influence on those of the other inland food markets of the Kingdom.

We are of opinion that the London Wholesale Market problem should be dealt with as a whole, and in this connection would point out that there is at present no one authority which has, so far as Greater London is concerned, power to create new markets or to improve, remove, or co-ordinate those now in existence.

7. Having regard to the facts set forth in the preceding paragraphs, we recommend:—

(a) That market facilities ought to be administered not in the interest of Private Owners or of Separate Local Authorities, but in the public interest.

(b) That full legal powers and full financial resources should be made available for that purpose.

(c) That the administration of those powers should be vested in one Central Authority for the whole of Greater London.

This Central Authority should have power, *inter alia*, to acquire compulsorily land and other property; to raise funds necessary for the purchase of existing interests or for the establishment of new markets; to close existing markets or to remove them to more suitable sites, and to make provision for any questions of compensation that may arise in connection therewith; to fix tolls, rents and other charges payable by users of the markets; and to erect and maintain any subsidiary buildings or undertakings for the benefit of such markets, such as cold storage, or other warehouse accommodation, and plant and equipment for the manufacture of ice, and the utilization of market refuse, waste material, etc.

8. It has been brought to our notice that the Corporation of the City of London have introduced a Bill with the object of extending the market rights of Spitalfields to every day of the week, and of expending further sums of money on the improvement of that market. We are of opinion that no extension of existing market rights and no further expenditure of moneys on the improvement of existing markets should be sanctioned by Parliament, pending the vesting of extended powers in a central body such as is indicated in paragraph 7 (c) above.

9. The choice of the Central Authority appears to lie between the following bodies:—

(a) The Corporation of the City of London.

(b) The London County Council.

(c) A Body specially constituted for the purpose.

As indicated in paragraph 6, no existing authority has powers extending over the whole area dealt with in this report; the market rights of the Corporation of the City of London extend to a distance of seven miles only from the City, whilst no market rights are at present vested in the London County Council.

10. We recommend that the third of the above suggestions should be adopted without delay and that a Market Authority, covering approximately the area known as Greater London, should be established to exercise the powers and functions set out in paragraph 7 of this report.

Provision should be made in the constitution of this Market Authority for adequate representation, among other interests, of the Corporation of the City of London (who are the principal holders of existing market rights) and the London County Council.

In making this recommendation, the Committee, while mindful of the great public services rendered by the Corporation of the City of London in the past, have had in view the fact that neither the Corporation of the City of London nor the London County Council exercises market rights or have any other jurisdiction over the whole of the area affected.

(Signed) CHARLES A. McCURDY,
E. F. STRANGE,
K. MANICOM,
A. E. WATERSON,
W. H. PEAT,
C. B. FISHER,
P. B. PROCTOR,
JOHN WARDLE,
DUNCAN CARMICHAEL,
WM. JNO. WADE,
HUBERT J. GREENWOOD,
G. BETTESWORTH PIGGOTT,
WILFRED STOKES,
C. C. BOYD,
GRANVILLE A. H. WHELER,
JAMES O'GRADY,
HINDLIP.

J. SCHOLES,

Secretary.

23rd February, 1920.

NOTE BY LORD HINDLIP.

It is with great diffidence that I venture to express any opinion, having been unable to attend more than one or two meetings of the Committee, and my having visited in the capacity of a Member of the Committee one market.

While I find myself more or less in agreement with the Majority Report, I feel there is a great deal in clause 3 of the Minority Report signed by Sir Lulham Pound.

I consider that Billingsgate, for instance, is handicapped by the practically non-existence of water transport, which prior to the war carried some 35 per cent. of the supplies.

I feel it is somewhat premature to come to decisions as regards the markets until more information is forthcoming as regards the future of the railways and provision of adequate services and rolling stock, and, in addition, the provision of coastwise shipping and perhaps incidentally the installation of machinery for handling produce of the various descriptions.

It is obvious that many improvements are needed, such as extensions and improvement of approaches, etc., and it appears, not unnaturally, doubtful whether private enterprise would be willing to incur the expense.

With these reservations I am signing the Majority Report.

(Signed) HINDLIP.

MINORITY REPORT.

1. I have to express my regret that I do not find myself able to agree with the Report of the majority of my colleagues. In my judgment, the investigation, so far as it has proceeded, does not warrant the conclusions which the other Members of the Committee have apparently arrived at. It would, in my opinion, have been far better to have investigated the matters connected with all the markets, especially the principal ones, before presenting an interim report making recommendations for setting up a new Market Authority.

2. It is impossible for me to agree to the sweeping assertion which has been arrived at in paragraph 4 of the Report on the small amount of evidence which has at present been submitted to the Committee. Except as regards Billingsgate, where extensive alterations are being undertaken, no serious complaint has been made with regard to the management and conduct of the markets under the control of the Corporation. It has been the constant practice of the Corporation to meet the requirements of the increasing population as they arise.

3. With reference to the representations of the Railway Executive Committee, the evidence produced shows that the principal cause of the "deterioration and loss of foodstuffs," especially of fish, is the extra length of time occupied in railway transit, and the consistently later railway deliveries to the markets, compared with pre-war days; the absence of suitable railway rolling stock (*e.g.*, there are no insulated vans used in the transit of fish, which is often carried in open trucks).

4. Although the area of the City of London is small, it is common knowledge that the Corporation accepts responsibilities and undertakes duties beyond the area of Greater London, and is constantly acting in matters which are national in character.

5. With reference to the conclusions of the majority of my colleagues, while cordially agreeing with recommendations (a) and (b), I do not admit the necessity for, nor do I see the advantage of, setting up a new Central Authority, until a more complete investigation of market matters has been made and justified the suggested change.

6. Especially do I deem it my duty to protest against the suggestion that, as regards Spitalfields Market, in respect of which a Bill is now before Parliament, no alteration or extension of existing powers should be sanctioned by Parliament, pending further investigation. Inasmuch as the Bill must, in the ordinary course, go before Committees of both Houses in order that its Preamble may be proved, ample opportunity will be afforded to Parliament to satisfy itself as to the necessity for such alteration or increased powers; and, even assuming a change of Market Authority to be eventually deemed desirable, such new authority would, in my judgment, require the powers sought by the Bill.

(Signed) LULHAM POUND.

APPENDIX.

LIST OF WHOLESALE FOOD MARKETS IN LONDON.

1.—Markets Owned by the City Corporation.

(a) *The London Central Markets (Smithfield).*

This market was established by an Act (23 and 24 Vic. cap. xcii.) in 1860, which authorised the utilisation of part of the site of old Smithfield Market, which was founded in 1614. This market is primarily a wholesale market for the sale of dead meat, the quantity of meat dealt with annually exceeding 400,000 tons, but a Retail Fish, Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Market is held under the authority of two Acts passed in 1875 and 1882, the first of which abolished the old Farringdon Market.

(b) *The Metropolitan Cattle Market (Islington).*

This market was formerly held at Smithfield, but was removed in 1855 to its present site at Islington, under the powers of the Metropolitan Market Act, 1851 (14 and 15 Vic. cap. lxi.). This Act provided for the appointment of five Commissioners as a Market Authority to erect and carry on a Cattle Market in place of the existing market at Smithfield, unless the City Corporation should within six months elect to undertake the execution of the Act. The Corporation exercised their statutory rights, and the market at Islington was established and opened on the 13th June, 1855. The market occupies a site of about 75 acres, but the whole of this area is not utilised for market purposes. Since 1869 this market has dealt only with home-produced cattle, foreign cattle being dealt with at the Foreign Cattle Market at Deptford. The market deals with about 300,000 animals annually.

(c) *Foreign Cattle Market (Deptford).*

This market was established under an Act (32 and 33 Vic. cap. 70) which was passed in 1869 with a view to the prevention of the introduction into Great Britain of contagious diseases among animals. Under parts 2 and 3 of this Act the City Corporation was made the exclusive local authority for the metropolis for the provision of a market for the landing, reception, sale and slaughter of foreign animals. The market was subsequently enlarged and now covers 30 acres. The property was handed over to the War Office at the outbreak of the war, and is still in their occupation; under the agreement entered into the War Office have the option within five years of the termination of the war of purchasing the freehold.

(d) *Leadenhall Market (Leadenhall Street).*

This market has existed from early times for the sale of meat, poultry, game and provisions. The present market was opened in 1881, after the previous market had been abolished by the Leadenhall Market Act, 1879 (42 and 43 Vic. cap. cii.).

(e) *Billingsgate Market (Lower Thames Street).*

This is the most ancient market belonging to the City Corporation. Several Acts were passed from 1699 onwards in regard to this market, and a Consolidating Act, dated 1846 (9 and 10 Vic. cap. cccxvi.), enacted that on every day of the week except Sunday the market should be a free and open market for the wholesale and retail sale of all sorts of fish and in any quantity.

A further Act in 1871 authorised the Corporation to purchase additional land and to extend the market. The improvements were completed in 1876, whilst in 1888 a block of buildings, known as Billingsgate Buildings, were erected on a site opposite the market. The area of the market proper, excluding Billingsgate Buildings, is, approximately, 39,000 sq. feet, with a basement of 20,000 sq. feet. The total tonnage of fish dealt with in the market in 1913 was 182,749 tons, of which 35.8 per cent. was water-borne. During the war the quantity of water-borne fish has been negligible, and at present amounts to a very small proportion of the whole supplies.

(f) *Spitalfields Market (Commercial Street).*

The right to hold a market in the vicinity of "Spittle Square" was granted by letters patent in 1682 to John Balch and his heirs. This right was limited to Thursdays and Saturdays, but the present market, which is used for the sale of fruit and vegetables, is open every day, and instead of tolls being collected in respect of produce entering the market, the owner of the market rights charges a rent, payable by the occupiers of the stands and warehouses comprising the market. The lease of the market was purchased in 1875 by Mr. Robert Horner, who rebuilt the market. In 1902 the City of London (Spitalfields Market) Act (2 Edw. 7 ch. clxv.) was passed, authorising the City Corporation to acquire the freehold and leasehold interests. The actual purchase has been delayed, but is now on the point of completion. The area of the market is about $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres.

2.—Markets not Owned by the City Corporation.

Covent Garden.

This market, which is the oldest and most important market in London for the sale of fruit, flowers and vegetables, was established under a charter granted to the Earl of Bedford by Charles II., in 1661. The market was subsequently regulated by various Acts of Parliament, and is at present worked under an Act (9 Geo. IV., cap. cxiii.) which repealed earlier Acts.

The area mentioned in the charter covered about 130,000 sq. feet, but the area of the market property has extended during the past 50 years beyond the original boundaries, and the total extent is now over 250,000 sq. feet, or $5\frac{3}{4}$ acres.

The market remained as part of the estates of the Duchy of Bedford until 1914, but it is now owned by the Covent Garden Estate Co., Ltd.

Borough Market.

A market was established in the Borough High Street under a Royal Charter granted by King Edward VI. to the Mayor and Citizens of London. This market was abolished in 1756 on the initiative of the owners, who desired that it should be given up for the convenience of the public. In the same year, however, a further Act was passed granting the Churchwarden, Overseers and the inhabitants of the borough of Southwark powers to erect and hold a market on its present site.

The existing market is about 3 acres in extent and does a large trade in fruit and vegetables, supplying the needs of a considerable part of South London.

Stratford Market.

The Great Eastern Railway Company established a market at Bishopsgate, but it was held that this market was an infringement of the market rights of Spitalfields, and the Company accordingly closed the Bishopsgate Market. A further action was brought against the Company by the Lessee of Spitalfields Market in regard to the market established by the Company at Stratford; but after the decision in the case of Bishopsgate Market, an agreement was entered into between the parties by which Stratford Market was to be kept open, but the Company were to pay to the Lessee of Spitalfields an annual sum fixed by the amount of produce sold at Stratford.

The market deals primarily with vegetables from Essex and East Anglia, but a certain quantity of fruit is also sold. The market supplies principally East Ham and West Ham, but buyers come from Woolwich and other places.

Brentford Market.

This market was established in 1893 under the powers contained in Section 166 *et seq.* of the Public Health Act, 1875, and took the place of an open market which had for some years previously been held for the wholesale sale of locally produced fruit and vegetables.

The market was extended in 1902, and appears to be at present fully adequate to deal with the business transacted there.

King's Cross Potato Depot	{ The Railway Companies claim these cannot properly be regarded as markets, but should be treated as receiving and distribution depots.
St. Pancras Potato Depot	

There are, in addition to the above markets, certain properties which have been used in the past for market purposes, but which have now fallen into disuse as markets. The principal of these are as follows:—

Shadwell Fish Market.

This was established under Private Acts of Parliament in 1852/3, and for some time belonged to the London Riverside Fish Market Co. It was, however, not successful, and was closed some time ago.

Columbia Market.

Powers to establish this market were given to Baroness Burdett-Coutts by the Bethnal Green Market and Approach Act, 1856. It was originally intended that this should be a general market, but, as this project failed, an attempt was made to establish it as a fish market. This endeavour also failed, and the property has now fallen into disuse for market purposes.

Cumberland Market.

This market was established by an Act of Parliament of George 4th in 1830. The market rights are owned by the Commissioner for Woods and Forests, but the property is let on lease, and is no longer used for market purposes.

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